

Press Room



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dear Editor,

After more than a decade of decline, alcohol-related injuries and fatalities have increased in California for the fourth consecutive year. Statewide, the number of people killed in alcohol-involved collisions increased 8 percent from 2001 to 2002. Six percent might not sound like much, but that's more than 100 lives lost.

Despite the efforts of law enforcement and dedicated groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and hundreds of others, Californians are once again mistakenly dismissing a DUI as if it were a speeding ticket. It's far from it. Motorists need to know that a DUI is not a slap on the wrist and there are no second chances. Drunk driving is a serious crime that not only has the potential to destroy the lives of victims, but the driver as well.

At best, a DUI means losing a drivers license, having your car impounded and paying up to \$10,000 in fines and court costs. The flip side can mean the end of a career, the death of a child or spouse or being left paralyzed for life.

California's not pulling any punches. The Business, Transportation & Housing Agency is directing the Office of Traffic Safety in making it a priority to provide the California Highway Patrol and local law enforcement agencies with the resources needed to do their job effectively to deter impaired driving and remove drunk drivers from our roads. During FY 2004, \$15 million in funding will be directed to education and equipment for the enforcement of California's DUI laws. And this month alone, more than 310 law enforcement agencies throughout the state will take part in a concentration of sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols.

If you're a drunk driver, your odds of getting off are not good. As the holidays approach, I ask all Californians to take it upon themselves to prevent friends and the ones you love from getting behind the wheel while impaired by drugs or alcohol. By making the choice to enjoy the holidays responsibly, such as designating a driver and always wearing a seat belt, we will put an end to this deadly trend.

Sincerely,

SUNNE WRIGHT McPEAK

Secretary

California Business, Transportation & Housing Agency